

Scrutiny and Audit Committee Report to Angus Council 2024/25

Introduction

CIPFA guidance recommends that all audit committees should “prepare an annual report that provides assurance to all those charged with governance that it fulfils its purpose and can demonstrate its impact.” (Audit Committees Practical Guidance for Local Authorities and Police, published by CIPFA in 2022.)

This report has been prepared to inform Angus Council of the work carried out by, and the impact of, the Scrutiny and Audit Committee during the period April 2024 to March 2025. It also provides details of the Committee’s membership and attendance.

Scrutiny & Audit Committee remit

The Scrutiny and Audit Committee is a key component of the Council’s corporate governance framework. It provides an independent and high-level focus on the audit, assurance and reporting arrangements that underpin good governance and financial standards.

The purpose of the Scrutiny and Audit Committee is to provide independent assurance to the full Council of the adequacy of the risk management framework and the internal control environment. The Committee provides independent review of Angus Council’s governance, risk management and control frameworks and oversees the financial reporting and annual governance processes. It oversees internal audit and external audit, helping to ensure efficient and effective assurance arrangements are in place.

The Committee’s remit is set out in Angus Council’s Standing Orders, last updated in January 2024. It covers all the core functions of the Committee. The remit complies fully with CIPFA’s 2022 guidance.

The Committee continued to hold hybrid meetings, with some members and presenters physically present in the Chamber, and others using virtual meeting technology.

All elements of the Committee’s remit, as detailed in the Standing Orders, have been fulfilled if applicable during the year, with the exception of oversight of risk management. Elements fulfilled have been achieved through information received from internal audit, external audit, other external scrutiny and inspection agencies, and assurances from management and partner organisations. Assurances about and from internal and external audit are summarised below. Other sources of information provided good assurance over the areas in the remit. Delays in updating the Corporate Risk Register meant that no reporting on that came to Committee

during the year, and only two detailed risk presentations were given. An action plan to improve risk management arrangements is in place, with a revised Corporate Risk Register presented to Committee, and a workshop to identify risk appetite taking place in April 2025. No items were referred to or from other committees in the year, although a number of reports were also considered by other committees.

Membership and Attendance

Membership of the Committee is set out in Standing Orders: *'13 members with not less than 8 of those appointed being councillors who are not members of the Administration'*. The Committee size is larger than the 8 members that the 2022 guidance recommends, however the Committee is content that this does not impede its work. There are currently no non-elected members of the Committee. The 2022 guidance recommends having two non-elected members on the committee. The committee considered this recommendation in March 2024 and again in April 2024 and concluded that they did not think this was necessary and that ad hoc specialist input could be sought when required.

The Committee met formally on eight occasions during 2024/25 and all meetings were quorate (at least five members in attendance). Seven meetings were scheduled but an additional meeting was held in September 2024 to consider the Annual Accounts and BV thematic report for 2023/24.

Scrutiny & Audit Committee Attendance 2024/25

Member	Expected attendances	No. of meetings attended	Nominated substitute attended
Cllr Fotheringham (convener)	8	7	
Cllr G. Nicol (vice-convener)	8	6	June and Aug Cllr McLaren
Cllr Beattie	8	5	Aug Cllr Durno Dec Cllr Braes Jan Cllr Clark
Cllr Bell	8	7	Aug Cllr Clark
Cllr Devine	8	8	
Cllr Doran	8	7	
Cllr Gall	8	7	Jan Cllr Stewart
Cllr Greig	8	8	
Cllr L. Nicol	8	7	
Cllr Proctor MBE	8	7	April Cllr McLaren
Cllr Shepherd	8	6	Oct Cllr Clark
Cllr Speed	8	8	
Cllr Wann	8	6	March Cllr Stewart

The Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive, Director Legal, Governance & Change (or their nominated substitute), Director of Finance (or their nominated substitute), other Directors, Service Leader Governance, Change & Strategic Policy, and Service Leader Internal Audit attended all Committee meetings and other senior officers also routinely attended. Representatives from external bodies, including External Audit, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue Services, Angus Alive, AHSCP, and Tayside Contracts attended meetings and spoke to their reports.

Training

A wide range of briefings and other training was offered to elected members during 2024/25. A training record is kept by Committee Services. In addition to several service-related and subject briefings and training that help with understanding risk, topics of particular relevance to the Scrutiny & Audit committee, that several members attended, included:

- * Briefing – Housing Improvement Plan
- * Treasury - Investments
- * Scrutiny and Audit Members training
- * 2025/26 Revenue & Capital Budgets

Internal Audit

Vacant posts within the Internal Audit team were filled in May and June 2024. The arrangement to share the time of the Service Leader Internal Audit with Dundee City Council on a 50:50 basis has continued through-out 2024/25. The Committee has accepted assurances from the Service Leader that this has been manageable to date.

The Scrutiny & Audit Committee takes assurance from Internal Audit on a wide range of issues and an update report from the Service Leader Internal Audit was considered at every Committee meeting except October. Completed audit reports for 2024/25 provided substantial or comprehensive assurance with one exception where Limited Assurance was provided: This related to Performance Management, and whilst there are still some open actions to be completed from the audit, progress has been made with a new performance Management Framework being launched during the year.

There were four Priority 1 actions open at June 2025 relating to payroll (three actions) and putting in place an agreement with Tayside Contracts for cleaning of non-school buildings (one action). With the exception of Risk Management, where several actions remain outstanding, Priority 1 and 2 actions brought forward from previous years' limited or no assurance reports have all been closed.

Report 185/25

Progress is monitored by Internal Audit and reported to the Scrutiny & Audit Committee throughout the year. Good progress has been made during 2024/25 to close actions and address weaknesses identified in systems.

Housing, particularly Housing Voids, is an area that the committee has continued to express concern about during the year. An audit of Housing Voids is planned during 2025/26 and in the meantime the new Housing Committee is overseeing the implementation of the Housing Improvement Plan.

External Audit

External Audit is another key provider of assurance to the Committee. The external auditors are appointed by the Accounts Commission, who also monitor audit quality. An Audit Scotland team is appointed as the Council's external auditors with 2024/25 being the third year of a five-year appointment.

The results from external audit reports during 2024/25 have largely been positive, with action plans agreed for areas for improvement.

- The 2023/24 Annual Audit Report (Appendix B Report 284/24) concluded positively on the majority of areas, but noted improvements had been agreed from the Best Value thematic report on Workforce Innovation, and that progress to implement previously agreed actions to improve Performance Management had been slower than originally envisaged. An action plan to address these areas, community engagement, assurances from cloud service providers, Digital Strategy, impacts and governance, and shared services was agreed.
- Their plan for 2024/25, presented to the Committee in April 2025, did not identify any unusual or high risks or additional work beyond the expected standard audit procedures.

Other Assurances

Assurance is received from a number of sources in addition to internal and external audit.

- Although all organisations are addressing the impact of financial pressures, good assurances were provided from the external bodies noted above as reporting to the committee.
- Good assurance was received from reports from the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland throughout the year. Over both agencies the majority of indicators concluded areas inspected were “good” or “very good”, with only two indicator results below “adequate” (Care Inspectorate) and none below

“good” (Education Scotland). One area reinspected following a previous “weak” inspection assessment was concluded to have shown “some progress”.

Self-assessment and action plan

The self-assessment for 2024/25 was undertaken at an online meeting on 28 March 2025 using CIPFA guidance for Audit Committees to facilitate the sessions. The questionnaire provided in the guidance, supplemented by questions about skills and knowledge that the guidance notes as required for audit committee members, was completed by members prior to the meeting, and the results informed the discussion. Questions were scored between 1 and 5. The results for 2024/25 were:

- Running of committee- total score of 182 (2023/24 183) out of 200.
- Knowledge average 4.10 (2023/24 4.09) out of 5
- Skills average 4.05 (2023/24 3.97) out of 5.

Results from the self-assessment questionnaire confirmed a very good level of effectiveness and compliance with the principles set out in the CIPFA guidance. No actions were identified from the discussions this year, and previous actions are all completed. These are detailed in Annex A.

External attendees' feedback

Nine people from six organisations (2023/24 15 people from seven organisations) were asked for anonymous feedback on their interaction with the Committee during the year. Seven responses (five in 2023/24) were received and are presented below. The figures in brackets are the 2023/24 responses.

Rating*	Fair %	Good %	Very Good %	Excellent %	Not Applicable %
Pre-meeting communication	14.3 (20)	14.3 (0)	42.9 (80)	14.3 (0)	14.2 (0)
Pre-meeting timing	14.3 (20)	14.3 (20)	42.9 (60)	14.3 (0)	14.2 (0)
Documentation preparation & submission	14.3 (0)	14.3 (40)	42.9 (60)	14.3 (0)	14.2 (0)
Joining instructions & ease of accessing remotely	0 (0)	0 (0)	57.1 (60)	14.3 (40)	28.6 (0)
Interaction during meeting	0 (0)	42.9 (0)	42.9 (60)	14.2 (40)	0 (0)
Post meeting Communication & Documentation	14.3 (20)	57.1 (40)	14.3 (40)	14.3 (0)	0 (0)
Follow-up Request	33.3 (0)	0 (20)	33.3 (60)	0 (0)	33.3 (20)

* "Very Poor" and "Poor" were also available as rating options, but no one chose them.

Report 185/25

No points for action were identified in the feedback. Several positive comments reflected that meeting worked well, with good preparation and structure, access and interaction of members during the meeting. The hybrid nature of the meetings was also commended. Lead times for providing papers prior to the meetings were noted as sometimes being tight in relation to the external provider's own timetables.

The overall rating for interaction with the Scrutiny & Audit Committee meetings in 2024/25 was 8 out of 10 (2023/24 – 8.8 out of 10).

Due to the appointment of a new Convener in May 2025 the report has been co-signed by the Convener in place during 2024/25 and the Convener at the time of signing.

Conclusion

As Convener of the Scrutiny & Audit Committee, I am satisfied that the Committee complies with the CIPFA Position Statement. The work undertaken by the Committee during 2024/25 fulfils the Committee remit and provides reasonable assurance that the Council's control environment and governance framework generally operated effectively and efficiently during 2024/25, although further improvements to performance management are planned. The Committee did not receive reports on corporate risk management arrangements during the period.


Actions have been put in place to address any weaknesses identified in reports and the Committee will continue to monitor completion of these actions. Significant weaknesses identified have been included in the Annual Governance Statement and Corporate Governance action plan as appropriate.


Signed_____Date_____
Convener of the Scrutiny & Audit Committee April 2024 to April 2025

Signed_____Date_____
Convener of the Scrutiny & Audit Committee 17 June 2025

Annex A – Committee Action Plan

Both actions brought forward have been closed. No further actions were identified at the self-assessment meetings this year. The risk appetite workshop referred to in the first action took place on 3 April 2025.

Action Code	AC-CGOV-00107		<div><div>100%</div></div>	Start Date	07-Dec-2023
Action Title	Committee Training Requests				
Description	Training to be arranged for the committee members identified through the <u>self assessment</u> : <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal Audit and Counter Fraud (Inc Assurance Mapping and Materiality)• Treasury Management• Financial Statements and Accounting• Risk Management• Value of Good Governance			Due Date	30-Jan-2025
Latest Note	Value of Good Governance and Internal Audit / Counter Fraud training took place 30 January 2025. Risk Management training to be combined with member input to risk appetite workshop which is to be arranged at suitable time related to risk management improvement timetable.				

Action Code	AC-CGOV-00112		<div><div>100%</div></div>	Start Date	02-Oct-2024
Action Title	Ensure Committee Actions Follow Up				
Description	Internal Audit will review implementation of the new process due to be developed by the end of July 2024 to ensure actions agreed at committee are closed off following committee			Due Date	31-Dec-2024
Latest Note	A new process has been developed by Committee Services to ensure that actions agreed at Council and Committee are undertaken and closed off.				